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Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council on a quarterly basis on the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report is the twelfth submitted pursuant to that resolution.

2. The report provides an update on United Nations activities in Iraq since the last report (S/2007/126), of 7 March 2007. It presents a summary of key political developments during the period under review, particularly efforts by the Government of Iraq to reduce the violence and promote national reconciliation, as well as regional and international developments pertaining to Iraq. The report provides an update on the activities of my Special Representative for Iraq, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, an assessment of the security situation and an update on operational and security matters.

II. Summary of key developments in Iraq

A. Political developments

3. Despite the initial success of stepped-up security measures in recent months, the situation in Iraq remains precarious. Insurgent attacks persist and civilian casualties continue to mount. While there was a brief lull in the level of sectarian violence early in the reporting period, it now appears that militia forces are resuming their activities, including targeted killings and kidnappings. The threat that the violence poses to the political process was illustrated by the bombing in the Iraqi Parliament on 12 April that resulted in the death of one lawmaker and injured several others. The Council of Representatives met in an extraordinary session the following day to condemn the attack and show its defiance. South of Baghdad, rising political tension in Basra and Qadissiya provinces resulted in an escalation of violence in those governorates. The Government of Iraq continued to engage leaders from across the political and religious spectrum to promote its national reconciliation plan. The efforts of the Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, to reconcile demands within his governing coalition were further challenged by the withdrawal of support by key allies in his Government.

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4. On 7 March, the Fadhila Party, which holds 15 parliamentary seats, withdrew from the United Iraqi Alliance, the leading bloc in the National Unity Government. On 16 April 2007, the Sadrist bloc within the Alliance withdrew its six ministers from the Prime Minister's cabinet. Unlike in November 2006, the Sadrists this time did not suspend the participation of their 30 legislators in the Council of Representatives. On 24 May Prime Minister Al-Maliki presented his nominations for the six ministerial vacancies to the Council of Representatives.

5. Shortly thereafter, on 5 May, leaders of the Sunni parliamentarian bloc Tawafoq, including Vice-President Tareq al-Hashemi, threatened to withdraw from the governing coalition expressing their disenchantment with the ability and commitment of the Government to address their concerns, particularly those related to the constitutional review process. On 7 May, following a meeting with Prime Minister Al-Maliki, the Office of Vice-President Al-Hashemi issued a statement saying that the meeting had helped move the political process forward. The Kurdish Alliance, which holds 53 seats in the Council of Representatives, also reportedly threatened to leave the Government at the end of March unless a referendum to decide the final status of Kirkuk was held by the end of 2007.

6. On 29 March 2007, the Minister of Justice, Hashim al-Shibli, announced that the Government had approved the recommendations made in February 2007 by the High Commission on the Implementation of Article 140 on determining the final status of Kirkuk and other disputed territories. Mr. Al-Shibli stressed that there would be no coercion or use of force in carrying out the decisions regarding the relocation and compensation of thousands of Arab families that had moved to Kirkuk under the "Arabization" campaign of the former regime. The Kurdistan Alliance praised the decision, while Turkomen and Sunni representatives, as well as Sadrists, denounced it for ignoring the rights of the concerned families and for failing to address the issue of property claims. Moqtada al-Sadr suspended two Sadrist ministers who had voted in favour of the recommendations.

7. Although the draft hydrocarbon law and its related annexes were endorsed by the Council of Ministers on 27 February, it has not been submitted to the Oil and Gas Committee of the Council of Representatives. There has been no decision on whether the hydrocarbon law will be voted on as part of a larger energy package with annexes and supporting laws or by itself. The four annexes currently under discussion address the allocation of oilfields, and related legislation is also being developed on revenue sharing, the structure of the Ministry of Oil, and the establishment of the Iraq national oil company. Under the proposed law, the national oil company would have jurisdiction over the country's oilfields and the authority to sign contracts. A federal oil and gas council would be established to set all policies related to contracts and other industry issues. A panel of oil experts from inside and outside Iraq would advise the federal council before it entered into any contracts.

8. Several parliamentarians and members of the Government, including Vice-President al-Hashemi, expressed the preference to consider these laws after the completion of the constitutional review, as it has direct implications for key provisions of the hydrocarbon law. Several political blocs expressed strong objections to certain provisions of the law. The Federation of Oil Unions articulated concern over potential production sharing arrangements and organized several demonstrations in Basra to voice its concerns.

9. On 26 March, the Presidency Council and the Office of the Prime Minister circulated a draft accountability and justice law that would amend the current de-Baathification process. According to the draft, there would be a three-month period to challenge former Baathists for their involvement in the repression instituted by the former regime, after which they would be immune from legal punishment for their past actions, would be eligible for employment in the public sector and receive their pension benefits. Former army officers and members of the security service above the rank of major would not be re-employed in the public sector, but they would receive their pension benefits. The draft law also weakens the powers of the De-Baathification Commission by vesting more powers in independent judges. It calls for the abolition of the Commission within six months after the law is ratified. The Chairman of the De-Baathification Commission, Ahmad Chalabi, produced his own draft law that is currently before the Legal Committee following a review by the De-Baathification Committee of the Council of Representatives. The existence of competing drafts sparked intense political debate, and on 21 April the Sadrist bloc rejected the proposed amendments to the existing procedures of de-Baathification, declaring them unconstitutional.

10. On 11 May, Sadrist and Sunni parliamentarians collected the signatures of 144 parliamentarians calling for a timetable for the withdrawal of the multinational force from Iraq. The petition, which was signed by a majority of members of Parliament, was submitted to the Speaker of the Council of Representatives. Most members regarded the petition as non-binding, but it did call on the Government to set a deadline for the withdrawal of foreign troops and it requested the Ministers of Defence, the Interior and National Security to identify a date by which Iraqi forces would be ready to assume primary responsibility for security operations in the country.

11. On 11 May, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the senior partner in the United Iraqi Alliance with 36 seats in Parliament, issued a 49-point communiqué declaring that it had changed its name to the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council. The Prime Minister visited Ramadi on 13 March to meet with provincial officials, security chiefs and tribal leaders of Anbar governorate. This marked the Prime Minister's first visit to the majority Sunni province. On 6 April, the Office of the Prime Minister announced its decision adopted at the end of March on providing pension payments for senior officers of Saddam Hussein's armed forces. A conference of Anbar tribal sheikhs was convened on 15 April 2007 by the Anbar Salvation Front. The conference called for cooperation with the multinational and Iraqi forces. The Anbar Salvation Front, which includes 17 tribes, was established in September 2006 as a paramilitary wing to unite against the threat posed by Al-Qaida in Anbar province.

12. At the time of its formation in November 2006, the Constitutional Review Committee set a deadline of 15 May 2007 for the delivery to Parliament of its report on recommended constitutional amendments. The deadline was later extended to 22 May due to the recess schedule of Parliament. On 23 May, the Committee's presidency informed the Council of Representatives that the Committee had prepared a draft report based upon a consensus reached among its members, including proposals for the division of powers between the federal Government and the regions and the handling of oil revenues. The Committee requested a further one-month extension to attempt to resolve outstanding politically contentious issues including the treatment of article 140 (resolving the status of Kirkuk and other

disputed territories) and the powers of the Presidency. To be adopted, the Committee's draft formulations will need to gain the backing of the full range of Iraq's political leaders and win popular support in a potential referendum. Iraq's political leadership is yet to endorse the Committee's draft recommendations.

B. Regional developments

13. During the period under review, several developments and events pertaining to Iraq took place in the region. On 10 March, a meeting of senior officials was convened in Baghdad to prepare for an expanded ministerial meeting of foreign ministers of neighbouring States. At the meeting, Prime Minister al-Maliki appealed to all participants to work together to help Iraq overcome its many challenges. It was agreed in principle to form three working groups to address the issues of border security, fuel and energy and refugees. A number of the participants considered the meeting a good first step in promoting regional cooperation on Iraq.

14. On 4 May, the Government of Egypt hosted the expanded ministerial conference of neighbouring countries of Iraq in Sharm el-Sheikh. The meeting included representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council, the European Union, the G-8, Bahrain, Egypt, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations. At the conclusion, the participants reaffirmed the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and national unity of Iraq. They also committed themselves to the principle of non-interference in Iraq's internal affairs and good-neighbourly relations with all its neighbours. The participants endorsed the formation of the three working groups and pledged to support them with active participation and technical assistance. They recognized the role of the United Nations in supporting ongoing political processes in Iraq, as well as the positive contributions being made by the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It was agreed to hold the next ministerial conference in Istanbul.

15. On 28 May, the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran held a meeting at the ambassadorial level in Baghdad, also attended by Prime Minister al-Maliki. It was the first such meeting between the two countries since diplomatic relations broke down in 1979. The parties limited their discussions to the security situation in Iraq. One principal concern for the Islamic Republic of Iran is the detention of five Iranian nationals on 10 January 2007 by coalition forces. Both the Government of Iraq and the President of the Kurdistan region have sought their release. Since their arrest, the multinational force has allowed the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit the detainees twice.

C. International developments

16. The Prime Minister of Iraq visited Japan and the Republic of Korea from 8 to 12 April. Japan announced that it would lend Iraq $862 million repayable over 40 years with a 10-year grace period. The money will be used to build an oil facility connecting pipelines in southern Iraq, fund fertilizer and oil refinery plants and improve the electricity supply. The loan is part of a $6 billion aid package that Japan pledged in 2003. On 5 April the Office of the Prime Minister of Iraq announced that it had negotiated a $500 million loan from the World Bank for reconstruction. On

12 April the Prime Minister signed a memorandum of understanding with the Republic of Korea on cooperation in the development of oilfields.

17. On 17 and 18 April, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) convened an international conference in Geneva to address the humanitarian needs of displaced Iraqis, both inside Iraq and in neighbouring countries. The meeting brought together representatives of 60 nations, who agreed on the urgent need to stem the outflow of people, assist those in need and provide support to neighbouring countries which are hosting refugees. UNHCR welcomed the positive and constructive spirit of the meeting. The participants also recognized the importance of seeking a broader political solution and promoting national reconciliation to improve the conditions on the ground for the return of refugees and displaced persons.

18. On 3 May, the International Compact with Iraq was launched in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. The event was preceded by a regional tour by Prime Minister Al-Maliki aimed at securing support for the International Compact. The Prime Minister and I co-chaired the conference, which was attended by 75 delegations. The participants unanimously adopted a resolution reaffirming their shared commitment to work in partnership with the Government of Iraq to a secure and stable Iraq, while emphasizing the need for national dialogue, improved governance, anti-corruption measures, equal protection for all Iraqis and an institutional framework based on the rule of law. Participants agreed to meet regularly to coordinate their efforts and review progress on these reforms and assistance. Most notably, representatives made considerable pledges in the areas of debt relief and financial assistance. The meeting demonstrated broad international support for the people and Government of Iraq in rebuilding their country. I also pledged the full support of the United Nations for the implementation of the International Compact.

III. Update on the activities of the Mission

A. Political activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

19. My Special Representative, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, maintained contacts with Iraqi political, religious and tribal leaders. To ensure timely and effective assistance in electoral and constitutional areas, he met with officials from the Government of Iraq, the Council of Representatives and the diplomatic community. He repeatedly stressed the need for a more inclusive political approach in the implementation of the Baghdad security plan.

20. He supported the efforts of the Government of Iraq to engage with regional actors and the wider international community. On 10 March, he attended a meeting of senior-level officials which was convened in preparation for an expanded ministerial meeting on Iraq. On 16 March he was in New York to participate in a preparatory meeting on the International Compact with Iraq. On 3 and 4 May, my Special Representative attended the launch of the International Compact and the expanded ministerial conference of neighbouring countries of Iraq in Sharm el-Sheikh.

21. I visited Iraq on 22 March for the first time since becoming Secretary-General and met with a wide range of Iraqi leaders. The trip also allowed me to take stock of the important work of UNAMI in person. My Special Representative also hosted visits by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, on 30 and 31 March, and my Special Adviser, Ibrahim Gambari, from 6 to 9 April. Subsequently, my Special Representative attended the international conference on Iraqi refugees and displaced persons in Geneva on 17 and 18 April.

22. In Baghdad, my Special Representative and UNAMI worked closely with the Government of Iraq, the World Bank, the European Union and the co-chairs of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility in Iraq in the establishment of secretariats for both the Facility and the International Compact. He also received representations from Iraqis and others regarding human rights issues, including detainees. In wide-ranging discussions with Iraqi politicians and senior diplomats, the status of the implementation of article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution on Kirkuk emerged as a matter of increasing priority.

B. Constitutional support activities

23. The UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support, with significant funding from the European Union, has provided substantive and logistical assistance to the Constitutional Review Committee of the Council of Representatives. Following Parliament's return to session in March 2007, the Office provided advice to the Constitutional Review Committee in the following specific areas: federalism, wealth sharing, the respective roles of the judiciary and independent institutions, the Iraqi Federation Council or upper house, the constitutional protection of human rights and procedural considerations relating to the constitutional review itself. The Office facilitated the constitutional review process by providing seven submissions in key areas of deliberation and responding to requests from the Committee for options for textual formulations. It maintained direct contact with the Committee throughout the review period.

24. To support its technical advice to the Constitutional Review Committee, UNAMI initiated a broad dialogue on the constitutional review and elements of Iraqi federalism with senior federal and provincial politicians and public servants. UNAMI organized two workshops in Erbil on 27 and 28 March 2007 on the constitutional review and Iraqi federalism, one for Iraqi governors and provincial council chairs, and one for members of the Kurdistan regional government. Participants discussed a range of issues including key challenges under the constitutional review process, principles of federalism and the distribution of powers, fiscal federalism and the sharing of wealth, legislation related to the formation of regions and the role of governorates, the importance of continuity in the provision of public goods and services during the transition from governorates to regions, mechanisms of intergovernmental coordination and the relationship between the Iraqi Constitution and future regional constitutions. In addition to these activities, the Office of Constitutional Support coordinated bilateral and international assistance through regular international coordination meetings.

25. In its interactions with the Constitutional Review Committee and Iraq's political leaders, the Office of Constitutional Support has focused on the core issues that will determine how Iraq's federal system will function. These include

establishing a balanced division of powers between the federal Government and the regions and providing guarantees on the national sharing and automatic distribution of oil and gas revenues. These are also among the most politically contentious issues and achieving consensual agreement on them will be difficult. The Committee has seriously considered substantive amendments in these areas, although not necessarily exactly in line with the Office's recommendations or preferred formulations. However, if some of the amendments currently being discussed are ultimately agreed to, they could go some way towards establishing the basis for the national Government to play a necessary coordinating role within the decentralized federal system envisaged by Iraq's Constitution. The constructive nature of the Committee's deliberations indicates that its members are making an attempt to address the concerns held by each others' communities with respect to the Constitution.

26. Finally, the Office coordinated bilateral and international assistance through regular coordination meetings and developed commentaries on parallel legislative proposals with significant constitutional dimensions, such as the draft hydrocarbon law and the law on regional formation.

C. Electoral assistance activities

27. Following the adoption of the law to establish the permanent Independent High Electoral Commission in January 2007, the Council of Representatives voted on 28 April to accept the nomination of nine candidates for five-year terms as electoral commissioners. The selection process was observed by UNAMI electoral staff with full access to all applications and deliberations of the nominating committee. UNAMI issued an observation report concluding that the selection process had been consistent with Iraqi legislation and the nominating committee's own procedures. The new Board of Commissioners selected officers for a one-year term, including the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Chief Electoral Officer and Rapporteur. All major communities are represented on the Board, which has requested continued technical assistance from UNAMI.

28. The International Reconstruction Fund Facility in Iraq approved a $6 million capacity-building programme to train the staff and Board members of the Independent High Electoral Commission. UNAMI is doing all it can to support efforts to retain Iraqi electoral staff for the Electoral Commission, which has suffered a 30 per cent reduction since the last election in 2005. The offer by the Government of India to host orientation training and briefings in New Delhi in the first week of June is much appreciated. This will provide an opportunity for Indian electoral experts to share their extensive knowledge of international best practices with the new Board members.

29. Considerable challenges remain in preparing for future electoral events. Of great concern is the lack of progress in improving the Iraqi voter registry, which was last updated in 2005. Consultations in the Council of Representatives are ongoing to agree on legislation to enable a referendum on disputed territories including Kirkuk, governorate elections and a referendum on possible amendments to the Constitution. The capacity of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to facilitate such discussions and provide technical assistance is being hampered by increasing security restrictions at both the Iraqi Parliament and the premises of the Electoral

Commission. Under these difficult conditions, UNAMI continues its efforts to strengthen the operational capacity of Electoral Commission staff and the new Board of Commissioners.

D. Human rights activities

30. UNAMI has continued to meet with Government and civil society representatives, as well as a wide range of Iraqi citizens, to assess the current state of the human rights situation in Iraq. I view favourably the recent decision by the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior to grant UNAMI access to all of its detention facilities. The Government's cooperation in this regard is most welcome. UNAMI intends to begin such visits in June.

31. There are a number of pressing human rights concerns in Iraq. These include the increase in the number of detainees and security internees during the past two months as a result of the intensified security operations; the need to do all possible to bring to justice law enforcement personnel suspected of serious human rights violations; intercommunal tensions and violence directed at ethnic and religious minorities; and the current conditions for freedom of expression, which worsen every time journalists and media workers are attacked. I continue to urge the Government of Iraq to do all possible to bring perpetrators of violence to justice and to strengthen the institutions that promote the rule of law, particularly the security forces and the judiciary.

32. On 25 April, UNAMI launched its tenth human rights report, covering the period from January to March 2007. The report reiterated that lasting stability and security can only be realized through the protection of fundamental rights and respect for basic human dignity. It highlighted a number of concerns relating to the accurate depiction of the current human rights situation in the country, particularly the systematic collection and processing of information on casualties registered in hospitals and medico-legal institutes throughout the country. I have asked UNAMI and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to work closely with the Government on how best to address this and the other important issues referred to above with a view to realizing an early improvement in the human rights situation, which is a priority concern of the international community. I look forward to strengthening our cooperative relationship in this regard.

E. Reconstruction, development and humanitarian assistance

33. Despite growing awareness and concern regarding the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, the situation deteriorated steadily during the reporting period. The violence has resulted in a protection crisis which dominates discussions related to a humanitarian response. For every death reported in the news, six family members on average are left without a breadwinner. The rising number of displaced persons is also a cause for concern. UNHCR estimates that displacement has continued at an undiminished pace and over 800,000 Iraqis have been internally displaced since the Samarra mosque bombing in February 2006, while 30,000 to 50,000 flee to neighbouring countries each month.

34. The violence is also having a major impact on Iraqi children and their ability to attend school. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Central

Organization for Statistics and Information Technology of the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation Development and the Kurdish Regional Statistics Office recently published a preliminary report of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey which estimated that 17 per cent of primary school-age children were not attending school in 2005 and 2006. This translates into approximately 765,000 children, of whom 61 per cent were girls, even before the recent escalation in the numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. Dropout rates are also increasingly outstripping school participation. Only 34 per cent of girls and 43 per cent of boys of secondary school age were attending secondary school in 2005 and 2006.

35. On 17 and 18 April UNHCR convened an international conference in Geneva to discuss the humanitarian needs of persons displaced inside Iraq and in neighbouring countries. It called for urgent action by the Government and all relevant parties to find durable solutions based on national reconciliation and respect for fundamental human rights and humanitarian law. The conference recognized the heavy burden borne by neighbouring countries, which are generously hosting some 2 million Iraqis, and called for greater bilateral assistance to the affected countries. It welcomed the initial commitment by the Government of Iraq to provide $25 million to assist both internally and externally displaced Iraqis. The Government recognized the specific vulnerability of Palestinian refugees and undertook to enhance their protection. It also undertook to provide displaced Iraqis with appropriate documentation to ensure their access to essential services. Commitments in support of the $60 million appeal by UNHCR were made by the United States, the European Union, Turkey, Germany and France.

36. In order to address the basic needs of the civilian population of Iraq, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes continue lifesaving interventions as and where possible. Safe water is emerging as a primary concern for displaced families. United Nations support includes water tankering in six districts in Baghdad and two in Anbar, serving over 70,000 people per day. However, this might also have the long-term consequences of reducing water availability in surrounding areas. The only way to meet the needs of the broader population, including the internally displaced, would be to renovate, extend and construct water supply systems.

37. Food has been identified as a priority need for many internally displaced persons, as preliminary figures indicate that 47 per cent of them do not have access to the public distribution system. The World Food Programme (WFP) is still providing food for tuberculosis patients, pregnant and lactating women, and malnourished children and their families across the country. At the same time, UNICEF has stated that about one child in 13 is underweight, and one in five is undersized for their age.

38. Consultations with donors and the Government of Iraq continued throughout the period in order to mobilize support for the Strategic Framework for Humanitarian Action in Iraq, devised by United Nations and humanitarian actors in the country. The Humanitarian Working Group in Iraq has been working on the operations plan, which is intended to operationalize the Strategic Framework by clearly articulating the agreed modalities for both implementation and coordination that need to be put into place for future humanitarian action in Iraq. Of primary importance was developing flexible yet effective coordination mechanisms that would recognize the operational challenges, as well as ensuring that credible information gathering was undertaken for accurate and appropriate response

planning. Of equal importance was the development of an advocacy strategy, which comprises a significant portion of the Strategic Framework and will be responsible for ensuring continued support and awareness among all stakeholders, especially on protection issues.

39. There is also a need to consider ways for adequate resourcing to enable both national and international non-governmental organizations as well as United Nations agencies to undertake immediate humanitarian assistance. This should complement the response and support mobilized by the Government of Iraq to ensure the provision of basic social services and assistance to vulnerable populations in Iraq. As the strategy to address the humanitarian crisis gains operational momentum, the United Nations will have to identify modalities for increasing its capacity to meet the growing demands for its leadership in this area. An initial step is the re-establishment of the presence of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in support of the Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, with an office in Amman.

40. At the same time, UNAMI and the United Nations country team will continue reconstruction and development programmes, including providing support for the International Compact with Iraq. Maintaining the longer-term perspective through development activities designed to support the Iraqi population in terms of governance, capacity-building and provision of basic services remain the guiding strategy, as outlined in the joint priority action plan.

41. The United Nations will assist in the creation of a Compact secretariat to provide the necessary support to the Government of Iraq to monitor the progress made by the Government and implementing agencies alike in achieving the objectives of the International Compact. The secretariat will not only provide immediate capacity to the Government but will aim to transfer that capacity to the relevant governmental institutions for future initiatives.

42. Only through assistance from the international community in this difficult period can Iraq fulfil its enormous human and economic potential. These complementary efforts — of providing immediate assistance to displaced Iraqis, while setting in motion interventions aimed at the medium and longer-term goals embodied in the International Compact — will be the strategic direction of the United Nations in Iraq for the coming period.

IV. International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq

43. As of 30 April 2007, the total contributions to the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund, one of the two funds of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, equalled $1.167 billion. A total of 148 projects valued at $1.02 billion were approved as at the end of April 2007 for funding under the Trust Fund. Continuing the significant progress in implementation, contracts worth cumulatively $730 million (72 per cent of approved funding) have been initiated and $622 million (61 per cent of approved funding) have been disbursed.

44. The fifth meeting of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq Donor Committee was held in Istanbul on 20 March 2007. It was preceded by a

meeting of the Iraq Reconstruction Forum on 19 March 2007, which provided an opportunity for the Government of Iraq to present reconstruction priorities to donors. The meetings were graciously hosted by the Government of Turkey, which also pledged a contribution of $10 million to the Facility, enabling Turkey to become a full member of the Donor Committee.

45. During the Donor Committee meeting, progress reports were presented by the United Nations and the World Bank to update donors on trust fund programmes, achievements, challenges and lessons learned. The Donor Committee reaffirmed its support for the Facility and concluded that it should remain an important vehicle for donors to support the implementation of the International Compact with Iraq. A commitment to increased Iraqi leadership was made through the decision reached during the meeting to pass the chairmanship of the Donor Committee from Canada to the co-chairmanship of the Government of Iraq and the Government of Italy. I would like to express my thanks to Ambassador Michael Bell and the Government of Canada for their effective chairmanship of the Facility over the past two years.

V. Security and operational issues

A. Assessment of the security situation

46. The security situation in Iraq remains complex and unpredictable and is a major limiting factor for the United Nations presence and activities in Iraq. The major development in the reporting period was the increased threat of indirect fire into the International Zone. These attacks have become increasingly concentrated and accurate and often consist of multiple mortars and rockets landing within minutes of each other. The International Zone experienced 17 attacks in March, 30 in April and 39 by 22 May alone. Since 19 February, indirect fire attacks have reportedly resulted in the deaths of 26 people in the International Zone. The security situation has been further compounded by the increase in car bombs in the vicinity of entry checkpoints to the International Zone. Armed groups operating in Baghdad have demonstrated their ability to strike at well-protected, strategic targets, such as the suicide bombing inside the Parliament building on 12 April.

47. The overall security environment presents a major challenge for the United Nations, particularly for its staff in the International Zone in Baghdad. Extensive mitigation measures were put in place within the International Zone to reduce the overall risk to United Nations personnel. Movement of staff inside the International Zone is controlled with a curfew and limitations on travel. Visits to government buildings outside the International Zone require armed escorts, and UNAMI has practiced procedures for this requirement. Due to the risks of indirect fire, the United Nations staff working in Baghdad have temporarily been relocated to more hardened accommodation facilities. With existing mitigation measures and training of United Nations staff, risk is still assessed at the medium level.

48. National staff working at all locations in Iraq are exposed to high levels of risk, particularly when travelling to and from work. During the reporting period one national staff member was kidnapped and, in a separate incident, a second was reported as missing. Both were returning from holidays abroad and were travelling through Anbar province. Their whereabouts are still unknown.

49. While there was a decline in civilian casualties in Baghdad, the multinational force and Iraqi security forces have suffered higher levels of casualties. Since the commencement of the Baghdad security plan, the multinational force and the Iraqi Security Force have attempted to open outposts inside neighbourhoods. Their location at small security outposts in high-risk areas has exposed them to frequent attacks by armed groups.

50. In Mosul and Kirkuk insurgents maintain a capability to use a wide range of methods to carry out attacks against security forces and civilians. In these two cities the use of car bombs against facilities of the two Kurdish parties is a frequent occurrence. In Tal Afar the frequent use of suicide bombs against civilians has led to increased tensions between the communities in the area. The recent use of high-explosive truck bombs in Erbil and Makhmour, some 70 km south-west of Erbil, resulting in hundreds of casualties, may indicate deterioration of the security situation in previously stable areas.

51. Baghdad security plan operations appear to have forced some insurgent activity out of Baghdad and into Diyala, Salah al Din and Tamim provinces. Although there have been reduced incident levels in Fallujah and Ramadi, the violence in Anbar has shifted to smaller towns and villages. This is partly a reflection of the growing conflict between Al-Qaida and the tribal leaders in Anbar province. In Basra the increase in indirect fire attacks on multinational force installations and Basra Palace led to a reduced United Nations presence. With redeployment of the multinational force from the Basra Palace to Basra Air Station, and consequent inability to provide adequate security at the site, all remaining United Nations staff and equipment were withdrawn from Basra Palace Island in April.

52. The addition of overhead protection to the UNAMI living accommodation in Baghdad is scheduled for completion soon. While this will significantly enhance the protection of United Nations staff, there is still concern that the level of overhead protection will not be sufficient to withstand direct impacts of larger-calibre ordnance, such as 107-mm and 122-mm rockets, which are increasingly used in attacks on the International Zone. The only long-term solution to this dilemma is the expeditious construction of a hardened integrated compound, with the necessary structural integrity to withstand impacts from high-calibre ordnance.

B. Facilities, logistics and support

53. Providing secure and adequate facilities for the United Nations staff in Iraq remains a priority support issue. Facilities currently available in Baghdad, on a lease or rental basis, fall far short of adequate long-term arrangements to provide secure working conditions for United Nations staff. In light of this it would appear that the only way to sustain the mission in the coming months and years will be to construct purpose-built structures. These structures will need to meet the very challenging security environment in Baghdad. Their provision will make the difference between the United Nations mission being able to operate effectively in the future or having to wind down operations due to the unacceptable security risks currently faced by the Mission. Accordingly, it is my intention to make arrangements for the expeditious construction of a new United Nations building in Baghdad. Although the high level of specification for security features will inevitably lead to relatively high

construction costs, it is felt that there is no realistic alternative if the Mission is to continue operations. With the support of the Security Council for this proposal, I intend to make arrangements for funding the new construction within the framework of the budgeting provisions for special political missions.

54. The redeployment of multinational forces from the Basra Palace compound has led to a reduction in perimeter security at the site. This in turn has led to the withdrawal of United Nations staff and assets from the UNAMI compound at the Basra Palace Island on 28 April 2007. Possibilities for establishing a United Nations presence at a new location in Basra are being explored. UNAMI and the United Nations country team are also considering the possibility of expanding the United Nations compound in Erbil and United Nations operations in the north of Iraq.

55. UNAMI continues to maintain offices in Kuwait city and Amman in support of operations in Iraq. However, there are plans to consolidate UNAMI offices outside Iraq in a single location in Amman by the end of 2008. This will result in the eventual closure of the UNAMI office in Kuwait.

56. As at 31 May, a total of $2.6 million had been pledged in new contributions for the Distinct Entity Trust Fund. I am grateful to the Governments of Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden for their generous contributions. However, additional funding from other Member States is required to ensure that the force providing security for the United Nations presence under the distinct entity ("middle ring") is well-resourced for the remainder of the year.

57. In January 2007, the Government of Denmark provided the Mission with a dedicated fixed-wing aircraft which partially facilitated the independent movement of personnel and materials between Amman, Erbil, Kuwait and the Baghdad International Airport. Movement of personnel and staff between the airport and the International Zone is solely performed with multinational force support. Denmark is unable to extend the arrangement beyond June 2007. The deployment of alternative aircraft, including commercial rotary-wing helicopters, is being explored. I am grateful to the Government of Denmark for its support and I reiterate my request to Member States to be forthcoming in providing aviation support to UNAMI.

C. Agreements

58. The status-of-mission agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Iraq was signed in June 2005. It has been agreed between the two parties that the agreement is to go into effect on the basis of an exchange of diplomatic notes attesting to ratification. The United Nations submitted its note in 2005, but the corresponding note on the part of the Government of Iraq has not yet been delivered. Consequently, the agreement has not been ratified, despite numerous follow-up requests. I hope that this ratification will be provided in short order, as this document provides a critical legal foundation for the ongoing work of the United Nations in Iraq.

59. The subordinate protocols mandated by the 8 December 2005 Agreement between the United Nations Organization and the Government of the United States of America Concerning the Establishment of Security for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, are virtually complete. However, as a result of the

turnover of multinational force officials assigned to this file, the finalization and signature/receipt of these protocols has not yet been achieved. I hope that, as a result of the recent arrival of the replacement of the outgoing multinational force liaison officer to UNAMI, this process can be finalized by the end of July.

VI. Observations

60. Iraq's political and social fabric continued to come under considerable strain during the reporting period as a result of ongoing political, sectarian and criminal violence. Despite the efforts of the Iraqi and multinational security forces to stem violence, progress was slower than had been hoped when security initiatives were launched at the start of 2007. This has been demonstrated by continued attacks on the civilian population, physical infrastructure and political institutions such as the Council of Representatives.

61. From my discussions with Iraqi leaders, senior officials in the region and the wider international community, it is clear that there is a growing understanding that the complex problems facing Iraq are interconnected and their urgent resolution is in the interests of the region and, indeed, the world. Several initiatives displayed a new level of solidarity in tackling the impact of the crisis in Iraq. The April conference in Geneva on displaced Iraqis was an important first step in seeking collective solutions to a growing problem that is affecting the region as a whole. Similarly the discussions at the launch of the International Compact with Iraq in Sharm el-Sheikh on 3 May 2007 and at the meeting of the neighbouring States, the Permanent Five and G-8 the following day were notable for their sober appreciation of the need to shore up the Government of Iraq's reconciliation efforts by concerted international support. The decision to activate the neighbouring States' technical committees on security, displaced Iraqis and energy supplies was further evidence of a willingness to strengthen collaboration on issues important to Iraq and its neighbours. I encourage all concerned to maintain this momentum and seek further concrete ways to foster greater cooperation for addressing Iraqi and related regional problems.

62. The Sharm el-Sheikh meetings demonstrated that the international community, while recognizing the complexities of the situation, is willing to work together in solidarity with Iraq. It is now incumbent upon Iraqi leaders to implement the commitments for the benefit of the citizens of Iraq. Given the continued violence, which is testing the country's unity, additional efforts are needed for confidence-building through national dialogue. The United Nations stands ready to support the Government of Iraq in this regard.

63. The constitutional review process and the work of the Council of Representatives provided an opportunity for expanding political dialogue. The Constitutional Review Committee is to be commended for its constructive work. A package of its recommendations could address some of the perceived shortcomings of the Constitution. However, important constitutional issues remain unaddressed in the recommendations put forward to the Council of Representatives. As a result, progress was delayed on other vital legislative requirements such as laws on hydrocarbons, provincial elections, de-Baathification and amnesty. The establishment of the Independent High Electoral Commission was a notable achievement during the reporting period.

64. The political process in Iraq is entering an exceptionally sensitive phase. It requires efforts at building bridges and calls for measures aimed at stabilizing the country. Therefore contentious issues, such as the referendum on Kirkuk and other disputed areas, must be approached carefully. Solutions must be found through sustained national dialogue, the patient search for compromise, and within the framework of the Constitution.

65. As was demonstrated through the preparations for the Sharm el-Sheikh meetings, the United Nations remains committed to assisting the Government of Iraq. There have been growing calls for a larger United Nations role in Iraq. Circumstance permitting, I would consider an expanded role and presence in Iraq where possible. For this, clear direction from the Security Council and the Government of Iraq would be essential and better coordination with our major international partners would also be welcomed. Of particular importance would be the creation of necessary infrastructure and operational conditions for the United Nations to play its role. This includes adequate protection and security arrangements, air support and, in particular, the construction of secure facilities. I am deeply appreciative of Member States that have contributed to the United Nations operations in Iraq by providing funds and technical assets or by deploying troops for protection. It is my hope that the Security Council and States Members of the United Nations will continue to provide strong political and logistical support for the Organization's presence in Iraq.

66. I wish to take this opportunity to thank my Special Representative for Iraq, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, for his continued leadership and the Mission's national and international staff, as well as the personnel of United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, for their dedicated work in fulfilling their mandated tasks. Finally, I would like to thank my Deputy Special Representative for Iraq, Jean-Marie Fakhouri, who is leaving the Mission on 30 June, for his service and valuable work under extremely difficult conditions. He has made a lasting impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance, development and reconstruction activities in Iraq, and I wish him all the best in his new endeavours.